

## - Variation (Biology) / Virus

# Omicron can evade immunity, quickly overtaking Delta globally in terms of circulation, says WHO

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Omicron is quickly overtaking the Delta variant of COVID-19 and becoming dominant around the world, a senior WHO official has warned, with the global health agency cautioning that there is “increasing evidence” Omicron can evade immunity but has less disease severity as compared to other variants.

It could take some time for Omicron to overtake Delta in some countries, because it depends on the level of circulation of the Delta variant in those countries, Infectious Disease Epidemiologist and COVID-19 Technical Lead at the World Health Organisation (WHO) Maria Van Kerkhove said on Tuesday. “Omicron has been detected in all countries where we have good sequencing and it’s likely to be in all countries around the world. It is quickly, in terms of its circulation, overtaking Delta. And so Omicron is becoming the dominant variant that is being detected,” Kerkhove said during a virtual questions and answers session.

She further cautioned that even though there is some information that Omicron causes less severe disease than Delta, “it’s not a mild disease” because “people are still being hospitalized for Omicron.” The COVID-19 Weekly Epidemiological Update, released by the WHO, said that over 15 million new COVID-19 cases were reported globally in the week of January 3-9, a 55 per cent increase as compared to the previous week when about 9.5 million cases were reported.

Cases rose by more than 50%, deaths stable

The number of new coronavirus infections in the last week jumped by about 55%, although the number of deaths remained stable, the World Health Organization said in its latest pandemic report. There were about 15 million new COVID-19 cases last week and more than 43,000 deaths.